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How dimensional computers add to business productivity

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

The age of computer graphics has arrived. The not-so-new-to-big-industry-but-still-a-rarity-in-the-classroom phenomenon made its debut at the University of Detroit earlier this month. Dr. Farrokh Nassirpour of Farmington Hills is director of the engineering department's Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Manufacturing (CAD/CAM) center. The \$850,000 system was built and partially donated by Computervision Corporation of Bedford, Mass.

A spokesman for the National Science Foundation said CAD/CAM has the potential to increase productivity more radically than any development since electricity. Used by both mechanical and electrical engineering students at U of D, the computers allow students to design, test, analyze and refine architecture, automotive parts and plant layouts. "The applications are limited only by the imagination," said Nassirpour, an assistant professor of mechanical engineering. The screen can make a drawing three dimensional and can rotate it to any angle. It can also zero in on any

part of the design and magnify it to the full size of the screen. Automotive and aerospace are two industries which already use computer-aided design in their work. "THE MAIN ADVANTAGE is that it greatly reduces the amount of time needed for making small technical changes in designs," Nassirpour said. A part can be changed by giving simple commands to the computer instead of redrawing the entire design. Nassirpour credits computer-aided design engineering for Chrysler Corporation's introduction of the K Car last year. Without it, K Cars wouldn't have

been marketed for another year, he said. Computer-aided design is also a boom to small industry. "Smaller companies with orders from shops can handle more contracts because it speeds up the process," he said. "A week's work can be done in a couple of hours." Computer-aided design allows for group technology in modifying designs. It is precise and a single video-display terminal can be purchased for \$200,000. Nassirpour predicts that in 10 years there will be fully automated factories where everything from shipping to packaging will be controlled by computers. Japanese industry is also moving that way in the technological race.

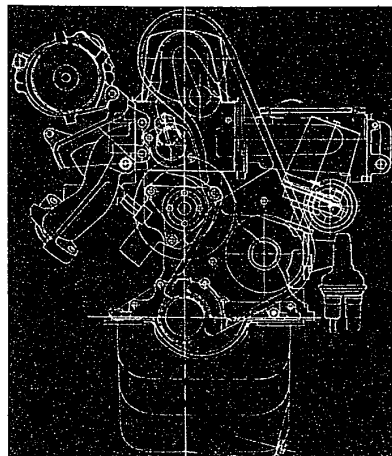
This semester, a group of sophomores are learning the computer language and simple commands, senior- and graduate-level courses are offered and the computers are used in U of D's continuing-education program by working draftsmen, designers and architects.

SHORT COURSES are planned for the summer for working professionals who may wish to upgrade their status. Nassirpour would like to double the number of display terminals so that greater utilization would be possible.

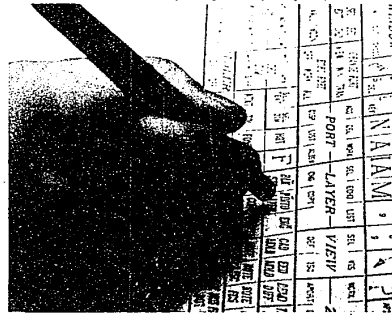
A graduate of the University of Wisconsin, where he learned computer graphics, Nassirpour joined the U of D staff last August.

As director of the facility, he is teaching faculty and student aides to work as operators.

A master's degree program in computer-aided design engineering is also in the works. "The idea is to support graduate students doing research," he said, "and to cooperate with local industry. Industry is moving very fast in this direction. Universities must keep up."



After punching in the appropriate code, a Ford Pinto four-cylinder engine appears on the screen. The computer is capable of showing any view of the engine requested by the operator. (Staff photo)



A light pen is used on this graphic's panel to construct the picture on the screen. (Staff photo)



Farrokh Nassirpour operates the computer system at the University of Detroit which will provide him with a three-dimensional rendering of an automobile engine. (Staff photo)

School budget overshadowed by tax proposal

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

The Farmington Public Schools' projected \$37.9 million budget for next

year will provide for the same level of services and a few improvements. The school board and administrators poured over the 40-page preliminary budget last week feeling overshadowed

and overwhelmed by the tax-relief proposal Michigan voters will decide on May 19.

If it passes, Farmington schools, like every other district in the state, would cut residential property tax for school operations in half.

That half, \$11,000,414, would be reimbursed by the state at a later as yet unspecified date. The state would raise revenues by hiking the sales tax from 4 percent to 5.5 percent.

Further, the district would be limited to an increase no more than 6 per-

cent over revenue collected last year. "Our real concern is how money will come into the district," Lewis Schulman, superintendent, said.

"We're extremely apprehensive of the coming year. We don't have a firm budget."

If voters defeat the proposal, the tax base could support all programs and a millage reduction would be possible, Schulman said.

HALF THE TAX bill is collected in July and half in December. If the pro-

posal passes, it is unclear when state reimbursement would be made.

The district wouldn't be able to levy additional millage without a vote of the electorate and would possibly have to borrow money.

"We haven't had to borrow money in seven years," Schulman said.

As many other school districts and local municipalities across the state would also have to borrow money to keep afloat, Schulman is worried that the cost of borrowing would rise and more funding would be spent on inter-

est payments than for educational purposes.

The new budget, \$3.2 million over the current budget, would provide for these improvements.

- A total of 12 new teachers, including music teacher, and a computer-education teacher.
- A hike in funds for vocational education to offset loss of state money.
- An increase in unemployment-compensation allocations.
- And a 1.3-percent salary increase for staff.



A model's life

Beatrix Avram, a fashion model from the Barbizon School of Fashion, was among the many professionals who stopped by Power Middle School to explain their career to students. A number of schools throughout the district have been conducting career days this month. (Staff photo by Randy Bost)

Zoning is the key Legislature debates group homes

By Darlene Stinson
staff writer

A bill now pending in the mental health committee of the Michigan Senate would prohibit the placement of group homes in many local neighborhoods.

Senate Bill 15 would ban group homes from subdivisions with deed restriction language that limits the use of single-family residences to related persons. Group homes for the retarded and mentally ill typically house six persons who are unrelated.

Deed restrictions have surfaced again and again as an argument of homeowners and municipal officials against the placement of group homes in some residential areas.

Deed restrictions of many local subdivisions contain that kind of language but courts have supported and struck down deed restriction arguments, depending on the exact phrasing of the language.

SB 15 is one of four pieces of legislation sponsored by State Sen. Donald Bishop (R-Rochester) to tighten state regulations of group homes. At a public meeting last week, aides to state Sen. William Faust (D-Westland) and state Rep. Tom Brown (D-Westland) urged homeowners to write their lawmakers regarding their feelings on the bills.

BISHOP, who voted against the 1977 state law which authorizes placement of group homes in residential neighborhoods, admits that SB 15 would severely limit areas where group homes could

be placed. He maintains that backers of the 1977 law did not intend to override deed restrictions, however.

"They ought to be upheld. There are other people out there who have rights too."

"A home is a person's greatest investment of a lifetime."

"For the courts to say that six unrelated persons are a family is insane."

Bishop has sponsored a package of three other bills on the group home issue, which are pending in the Senate's municipalities and election committees.

One of those bills would require the Michigan Department of Social Services (DSS) to set a ceiling on the amount of profit which could be earned by the owner of a group home by leasing the building to the state.

Bishop cited one group home in Grosse Pointe Park which reportedly is being leased to the state for \$2,400 a month. Tom DeLoach, an information officer for the Michigan Department of Mental Health, said long-term leases of group homes provide for an average rental of \$900 to \$2,000 a month.

Rental agreements, which must be approved by Michigan Department of Management and Budget, provide for a profit for group home investors, said DeLoach. The cost of safety improvements, such as installation of an additional exit, also are reflected in rental payments.

"THERE SEEMS to be an extraordinary degree of return," Bishop said of group home leases. "We're trying to get a handle on it."

The state senator also cites a recent Auditor General's report on the operations of group homes sponsored by the Macomb-Oakland Regional Center. State workers who advocate group homes say the program is more "cost effective" than housing the retarded and mentally ill in institutions.

But Bishop says the audit "came up with a tremendous amount of criticisms on the costs. According to Bishop, the Senate appropriations committee has asked for an explanation regarding that audit and other financial matters from the

Mental Health Department.

"This is only the tip of the iceberg on the way these (homes) are being established," he said. "The problems are a lot larger than I anticipated."

Other provisions of SB 12, 13, 14 and 15 include an increase in the minimum distance between group homes from 1,500 to 2,500 feet, a reduction in the number of residents from six to four and a bonding requirement for group home operators.

Bishop said all the bills are "lying dormant" in committee at the present time.

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